



## **EFL Teachers' Perceptions of the Individualized Learning Model: A Case at an English Language Center**

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“EFL Teachers’ Perceptions of the Individualized Learning (IL) Model: A Case at an English Language Center” was conducted to obtain two research aims: (1) to find out the teachers’ perceptions of the IL model; (2) to investigate the benefits and difficulties teachers face when they implement the IL model in their classrooms. The research utilized the questionnaire and semi-structured interview to collect data from 26 teachers from the English language center where the individualized learning model is implemented. The results show that the mean scores of all items related to teachers’ perceptions show that their perceptions of the IL were high ( $M=3.8423$ ) on the five-point Likert scale (see Table 2). As a result, the teacher understood the IL rather well and revealed four main advantages related to the flexibility of the learning pace, the material and the learning schedule; the instant supports from the teachers; the increase in learners’ confidence; and the improvement of learners’ academic performance. However, the results of the interview also revealed two main disadvantages including time-consuming and lack of interaction between learners and learners. In addition, the results also show that there was a positive correlation between teachers’ perceptions and the way they implemented the IL in their classroom. The contention is that decision should be made as to what degree of the individualization will be implemented.

**Keywords:** individualized learning, teachers’ perceptions of individualized learning, teachers, learning

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teaching and learning English in a classroom model in which learners have to follow a fixed schedule has strictly been applied in Vietnam for a long time. The inflexibility of the traditional classroom learning (regular attendance, fixed study plans, classroom time, learning pace, etc.) has made it difficult for learners to pursue their education, especially learners with fulltime work or with unstable working schedules. Therefore, there should be major changes in its curricula and teaching-learning model to better suit a variety of

**Citation:** Nguyen, C., Le, D., & Ngo, H. (2022). EFL teachers' perceptions of the individualized learning model: A case at an English language center. *International Journal of Instruction*, 15(1), 437-456. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.15125a>

learners' needs. For that reason, English education should slant towards the view that the learning model should be flexible and place learners at a central point. With this new philosophy, the IL model has been applied to address the needs of learners.

In the IL, learners are allowed for more flexibility. They can arrange their own learning schedule and learning pace with consultation and discussion with their own tutors. Learning pace and content are determined by each learner's abilities, interests, and needs. In the Vietnamese context, the IL model has been applied as an alternative of learning model to help learners with their unstable business schedules. According to Meyer et al. (2008), the IL model highlights some profits to learners not only in facilitating learner-centered education and can be used with learners of all levels but also in enhancing motivation and better confidence.

Realizing the benefits of the IL, many English language centers have designed some courses based on its practices. Since the IL was started to implement, it has influenced the way how teachers act in the classroom. As a result, it might also impact processes of knowledge sharing between teachers and learners. Concerning the personal teaching context, the researcher looks over the issues related to teachers' perceptions of the IL model in teaching and learning English.

It is observed that although the IL model has been applied for some time, it is also a controversial issue among many teachers. The controversy is much related to how it should be implemented to make the most beneficial and suitable for their real context. The research "EFL Teachers' Perceptions of the Individualized Learning Model: A Case at an English Center" was conducted to gain the teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the IL model and investigating the advantages and disadvantages the teachers face when they implement this model in their classrooms. It aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. *What are the teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the IL model?*
2. *What are the advantages and disadvantages the teachers face when implementing the IL model in their classrooms?*

## **Literature Review**

### **The concept of the individualized learning**

There are several ideas attempting to crystallize the term "individualized learning". It is often connected with other approaches to learning such as "independent learning", "personalized learning", "self-directed learning", "self-paced learning" or "self-regulated learning. According to Bahri, et al., (2021), self-regulate learning was an essential variable for academic success, especially in blended education. Bray & McClaskey (2012) claimed that IL means instruction which is paced to learning needs, adjusted to learning preferences and to the specific interests of different learners. According to Highland (2015) in the IL model, the teachers play the role of a facilitator of learning not the main focus as learners are the people who make all decision related to their learning. Teachers give help based on their decision by making checklists of what to do for them to work toward their learning goal. In the checklist, there are tasks, knowledge and skills learners need to follow and complete. In this research, the

“individualized learning” can be understood as follows: learners are assessed individually when beginning a course and then start with the appropriate level. The standards are the same for all learners in the same level but the curriculum follows goals based design and the individual learning profile and plan for each learner may vary. The IL model in this research consists of three main aspects, viz. *the IL goals, the IL plans and the IL instruction*.

### **The individualized learning goals**

To be successful in learning a new language, it is important to put a goal and try best to achieve that goal by adequate learning strategies and plans. In the IL model, learning goals should be stated in terms of what learners will recognize as a result of the lessons such as knowing how to use cohesive devices in writing an essay or how to link the sounds... or getting IETLS 7.0 or TOEIC 650.... Goal setting is a vital factor in IL as it helps motivate learners to achieve better academic results (Tran & Phan Tran, 2021). Many researchers (Tran & Duong, 2013; Winne & Hadwin, 1998; Wolters, 1998) claim that goal setting is considered as the element which helps utilize IL strategies effectively because it is standard to regulate learners’ actions.

Goals specify desired forms of learners’ thinking, performance, engagement and behavior. Having stated goals, according to Nguyen (2015), is essential for learners as it helps learners comprehend and support the learning content not only in their process of learning but also in the final achievement. In IL learning, “when learners implemented it correctly and effectively, goal setting becomes the potential to positively long-term influence on their learning.” (Tran & Phan Tran, 2021: 461). Hubbard (2012) claimed that the curriculum following goal-based design focuses on developing real-world behaviors that will lead to performance improvement.

### **The individualized learning plans**

Goals are an essential part of the IL model but they cannot make sure of actual learning. Schunk (2001) states that both goal setting and goal planning are mutually complementary factors in learner-centered programs so plans must be in place to meet the goal. According to Lockspeiser (2016), the individualized learning plan (ILP) serves as an action plan to direct learning. It is designed by the learner and is combined with multiple different goals, plans to achieve these goals as well as the outcome measures used to decide when the goal has been accomplished. Another key thing to remember is that an adequate plan should be more detailed than only enrolling in a particular course or receiving provided instructions. Therefore, creation of a realistic plan is also a key to success. A plan that is achievable and realistic is one that considers how the goal will be incorporated into required day to day.

### **The individualized instruction**

Individualized instruction refers to the use of strategies, resources, and assessments to meet the needs of one particular learner. It guarantees that a learner is getting learning support, guidance and flexibility adequately to get more opportunities for academic growth. In a study, Gagne, et al., (1992) indicated the instructions in the IL are those which consider the needs of the learners. Preferably, the learners would control the pace

at which they progress through instruction and the materials they use would be suited to their cognitive skills and learning styles. There is evidence that the individualized instruction can help learners gain more self-confidence since lessons are customized to their particular capacities. King (2013) stated that individualized instruction is not only for lower proficiency learners, but also for advanced learners who may need enhancement due to speed-up learning. Individualized instruction (2001, March 23) listed four main benefits of the individualized instruction as follows:

- Individualized instruction allows a student who is above or below "average" to proceed at the student's own pace for optimal learning.
- Students do not have to repeat portions of a course that they have already mastered.
- Students learn the self-discipline needed to motivate themselves and to keep their progress on target.
- Students can check their own results on class work and seek help when needed.

#### **Factors affecting teachers from implementing the individualized learning model**

Learners face many difficulties in the IL for various reasons such as motivation, intellectual ability, attention spans, prior knowledge. Therefore, teachers are expected to possess efficacies related to planning, implementing, instructing, selecting appropriate methods and techniques, monitoring and evaluating the progress of learners in the individualized instructional environment (Yasar, 1994 as cited in Karadag, 2010).

In the literature, there has been a dearth of studies on the IL model. Baker (1973), in his study related to the IL, concluded that the IL allows the selection of both the curriculum and the manner in which it will be presented for each individual learner. However, it takes of time for staff planning. It also requires budgets which realistically face the problems of well-designed and validated materials; systematically evaluation. Karadag (2010) conducted a research with 321 primary school teachers working at 40 primary schools with the use of the questionnaire, aiming to find out the teachers' perceptions and the roles of the teacher in the IL model. The results showed that the teachers perceived themselves as sufficient in planning the learning process and determining the educating exercises. Furthermore, teachers perceived themselves moderately sufficient in establishing objectives for learners; designing suitable teaching material in teaching-learning process; connecting new knowledge with learners' prior knowledge and; constructing the environment which helps students to realize their powerful and weak aspects. However, they perceived themselves insufficient in terms of scheduling teaching-learning process with convenient individual differences and constructing environment with convenient for students who need special education. In 2015, Frunză & Petre investigated the obstacles in learning's differentiation and individualization on primary school. The participants were 60 teachers reported (in the analysis) to three indicators: age, professional grade, professional seniority. The research implied that the ILPs represent a concrete and straightforward way to individualize education and also foster the skills necessary for self-regulated lifelong learning. All in all, very few studies have been conducted related to individualized learning and much fewer, if not any, focus on both teachers' perceptions and advantages and disadvantages of the IL model when they implement it in classrooms.

## METHOD

### Research setting and design

This research was conducted at an English language center in a city, Vietnam where IL was being implemented. This is one of the biggest English language centers in the city with both Vietnamese teachers of English and native teachers. It was a descriptive research study which combined both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### Participants

The participants were 18 Vietnamese teachers of English (10 males and 8 females) and 8 native teachers (6 males and 2 females) from the English language center where the IL model was implemented. In addition, their teaching hours were also guaranteed at minimum 24 hours/ week. Their teaching experience with this model ranges from 1.5 to 5 year experience with the IL. Furthermore, all participants pursued high education and professional development, they are bachelor and master degree holders. Some of them graduated from universities of education and those who did not finish their degrees at universities of education had TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) Certificates.

### Research instruments

#### *The questionnaire*

The content of the questionnaire was mainly based on theories presented in literature review and are developed and proposed from Karadag (2010) in which the main purpose was to determine the perceptions of teachers about the individualized learning model. The questionnaire consists of 40 items including five clusters which aim to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the implementation the IL model as follows:

- Cluster 1: Teacher's general perceptions of the IL. (items 1 to 11)
- Cluster 2: Teachers' perceptions in planning the IL. (items 12 to 16)
- Cluster 3: Teachers' perceptions in implementing the IL. (items 17 to 27)
- Cluster 4: Teachers' perceptions in motivating the learners in the IL. (items 28 to 32)
- Cluster 5: Teachers' perceptions in evaluating learners in the IL. (items 33 to 40)

A five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* was employed to investigate teachers' perceptions. The participants had to decide whether they *strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree or strongly agree*.

The Vietnamese version of the questionnaire employed in order to maximize the understanding, save time and achieve full completions from the Vietnamese participants.

Before the questionnaire was officially used in the main study, it was piloted with 10 teachers at another English language center where the IL model was implemented with experienced teachers in IL model. They were encouraged to give feedback on the wording as well as the meaning of each item in the questionnaire. Of equal importance, the Cronbach's Alpha formula was used to estimate the reliability of questionnaire. The result showed that the internal consistency of the questionnaire was .797, which was satisfactory to be applied in the research.

*The interview*

There are 5 questions for the semi-structured interview designed and developed based on the questionnaire and mostly aimed to gain data related to the advantages and disadvantages the teachers face with IL model. The interview was conducted after the collection of the questionnaire. Nine teachers out of 26 were invited randomly for the interview. The interview was conducted via Google form since it would make the participants more comfortable as well as free of pressure to answer the interview questions. All the participants were reminded to respond in English. Thanks to their experience, the teachers provided helpful information about the advantages and disadvantages they faced when the IL model was implemented in their classrooms.

**Procedure of the implementation of the IL at the English language center**

In 2010, Duong and her colleagues developed a program called “Active Learning” (AL) in an English Center. It was then established in the city. The program enables learners to have more time to interact with teachers. Moreover, the AL model is also planned to enhance language skills, break through communication barriers, develop confidence and promote motivation. Since then, this program has been implemented by many other English language centers. The center where I am teaching started applying it to our courses in 2012 and named it “individualized learning courses” with the thoughts that individual initiative on the part of a learner is one of the major determinants of his or her success in mastering the English language.

Before starting every course, learners are asked take a placement test provided by the English center to clarify their proficiency level. The curriculum and material are designed for each individual fitting their placement test result and pursuing their learning goal which is included in each learner’s profile. Learners can work individually or in small cooperative groups. In each period, they are delivered new topics following their own curriculum, they then have time to prepare it. For speaking skills, each learner has 10-15 minutes one-on-one talking with a native English instructor at the center. Another key thing for learners who take these courses is that they are free to ask for support related to their study as needed. These IL courses aim, as expected by the center, to encourage learners to focus on and strengthen their areas of weak skills thus endeavoring to eliminate the skill disparity problem that can stifle overall language performance.

*Data analysis*

The results off the questionnaire were reported with the Statistic Test of SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Science). The mean scores would help reveal the teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the individualized learning. After that, the responses from the participants were coded into numbers, from 1-5 (1. *strongly disagree*, 2. *disagree*, 3. *neutral*, 4. *agree* or 5. *strongly agree*). To make the analysis of the data more rational and comprehensive with five-point Likert scales, the intervals for breaking the range in measuring each variable are delimited according to the Cohen’s (1988) inventions of the difference between two mean scores, it is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1  
The difference between two means

Size of effect	d	% variance
small	.2	1
medium	.5	6
large	.8	16

As shown from Table 1, the difference between two means is medium when it is 0.5. Therefore, when the mean score of the teachers' level of perceptions approximately reaches these following ranges, it can be interpreted as:

1.00 = Very low, 1.50 = Low, 2.00 = Somewhat low, 2.50 = Below average, 3.00 = Average, 3.50 = Above average, 4.00 = Somewhat high, 4.50 = High, 5.00 = Very high

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed based on the protocol designed by the researcher. The responses from the participants was synthesized by salient themes. In this research, the salient themes were indicated by word repetition; key-word-in-context; compare and contrast; cutting and sorting. These salient themes were then analyzed to provide more insightful understandings and interpretation about the advantages and disadvantages teacher face when implementing the individualized learning model in their classroom.

## FINDINGS

### *Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the individualized learning*

Participants ranged their responses to each item from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree to strongly agree. The responses then were coded into number, specifically: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

After being coded, the data collected through 40 items in the questionnaire was subjected to the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis.

First of all, the reliability was checked. The Cronbach's alpha was high ( $\alpha=.886$ ), which could prove that the questionnaire was reliable. Therefore, the data could be analyzed with a Descriptive Statistic Test of SPSS to collect the average mean score of perceptions of the 26 teachers of the implementation of the IL model. The result of the test is shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
Overall teacher's perceptions of the implementation of the individualized learning

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall	26	3.23	4.60	3.8423	.36536
Valid N (listwise)	26				

As can be seen from Table 2, the mean score of the questionnaire was  $M=3.8423$ . A one sample T-test then was run to check whether the teachers' level of perceptions ( $M=3.8423$ ,  $SD=0.36536$ ) is statistically different from the test value of 4.0 – the somewhat high level of perceptions. The result showed that there was a difference between the teachers' level of perceptions of the implementation of the IL and test value

4.0 ( $t=-2.201$ ,  $p=.037$ ). It confirmed that the teachers' level of perceptions of the implementation of the IL was just above average.

#### *Teacher's general perceptions of the IL*

All the items from cluster 1 of the questionnaire aim to investigate the teachers' general perceptions of the IL. A Descriptive Statistics Test was analyzed and the result was illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3  
Teachers' general perceptions of the IL

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cluster1	26	3.09	4.45	3.8811	.40474
Valid N (listwise)	26				

The mean score of the participants' general perceptions of the IL was ( $M=3.8811$ ,  $SD=0.40474$ ). It was then run using One Sample T-Test with the test value 4.0 to check whether there was any statistically difference. The result presented that no difference between the mean score of teachers' general perceptions of the IL and the test value 4.0 was observed ( $t=-1.498$ ;  $p=.147$ ). It indicated that the teachers somewhat perceived their general roles in the IL highly.

Notably, it is also important to observe the differences among the mean scores of each item from Cluster 1 about the teachers' general perceptions of the IL. The Descriptive Statistics of the specific items in cluster are shown in Table 4.

Table 4  
Teachers' general perceptions of the IL in particular items

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Teachers are aware of learners' readiness levels when starting the course in the IL model.	26	2	5	3.65	.846
2. Teachers base on the ISMART mnemonic (important, specific, measurable, accountability, realistic, timeline) to orientate the learning goal for learners.	26	1	5	3.31	.884
3. After the learners set their learning goals, teachers create opportunities for learners to make decision on the learning courses according to learners' individual differences	26	2	5	4.00	.894
4. During the course, teachers establish objectives for learners based on the learner's learning goal and performances.	26	1	5	4.08	.977
5. Teachers create learning environments that help realize learners' strengths and weaknesses themselves.	26	2	5	3.96	1.038
6. With individual learners, teachers will apply appropriate guidance.	26	3	5	4.23	.815
7. Teachers also determine adequate materials for individual learners.	26	2	5	3.92	.845
8. Teachers also play the role of guiding learners to collaborate with relevant experts in line with their interests and learning needs.	26	3	5	3.77	.587
9. According to developmental levels, attention spans, prior knowledge and interests of learners, teachers give responsibility and assign tasks.	26	2	5	3.88	.816
10. Teachers can use variety of assessment and evaluation approaches according to learners' individual differences.	26	2	5	3.85	.675
11. Teachers also promote learners' motivation in the individualized learning model.	26	2	5	4.04	.871
Valid N (listwise)	26				



It can be seen in Table 4 that the participants showed their highest agreement on item 6 ( $M=4.23$ ). In addition, the participant also focused on some other perceptions such as creating opportunities for the learners to make decision on the learning courses ( $M=4.00$ ); establishing objectives for learners based on their learning goal and performances ( $M=4.08$ ). In contrast, the teachers' perceptions of orientating the learning goal for learners based on the ISMART mnemonic (important, specific, measurable, accountability, realistic, timeline) received the least agreement ( $M=3.31$ ). The result specified that there still were a number of teachers who were hesitant about the ISMART mnemonic when orientating the learning goal in the IL. In the IL, it is important to ensure that the goal is specific and relevant to learners' day-to-day work.

#### *Teachers' perceptions in planning the IL*

Since the ILP is designed by learners and combined with multiple different goals, plans to achieve these goals as well as the outcome, teachers can enable learners to think beyond how they will actually learn in term of knowledge and language skills. The Descriptive Statistic Test of the result of teachers' perceptions of planning the IL is demonstrated in Table 5 below.

Table 5  
Teachers' perceptions of planning the IL

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cluster 2	26	2.60	4.60	3.8308	.44070
Valid N (listwise)	26				

As it might be seen, the mean score of the test was  $M=3.8308$ . A One-Sample T Test was run to check whether the mean score of the teachers' perceptions of planning the IL is statistically different from the test value of 4.0. The result indicated that no difference between the mean score of teachers' perceptions of planning the IL ( $M=3.8308$ ,  $SD=.44$ ) and the test value 4.0 was observed ( $t=-1.985$ ;  $p=.061$ ). A deeper understanding of the test result specified that the teachers' perceptions of planning the IL was somewhat high.

Table 6 below shows the results of the items about the teachers' perceptions of planning in the IL.

Table 6  
Teachers' perceptions of planning the IL in particular items

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
12. Teachers use the information about individual learner's characteristics, English proficiency level to plan of teaching and learning process.	26	2	5	3.62	.898
13. Teachers plan to adjust the learning pace to individual learners.	26	3	5	3.88	.588
14. Teachers are aware of the skills needed for learners' academic success.	26	3	5	3.88	.653
15. Teachers plan different activities to respond to the needs of learners.	26	2	5	3.62	.941
16. Teachers determine appropriate instructional activities for learners with different learning characteristics.	26	3	5	4.15	.732
Valid N (listwise)	26				

The result from Table 6 uncovered that teachers did pay attention to determining appropriate instructional activities for learners with different learning characteristics

( $M=4.15$ ). During the implementation of the IL, teachers usually help learners think beyond how they will actually learn in term of knowledge and language skills. It leads to the awareness of the skills needed for learners' achievement. The results from the Table 6 also showed that teachers also perceived the adjustment of the learning pace ( $M=3.88$ ) and the awareness of the skills needed for each individual learner ( $M=3.88$ ).

The Paired-Samples T Test was conducted to check whether there was a significant difference between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants' perceptions of planning in the IL. The mean score of the participants' general perceptions of the IL ( $M=3.8811$ ,  $SD=.40$ ) was higher than the mean score of the participants' perceptions of planning in the IL ( $M=3.8308$ ,  $SD=.44$ ). The result indicated that there was no significant difference between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants' perceptions of planning in the IL ( $t=.600$ ;  $df=25$ ;  $p=.554$ ). It could be concluded that there was no such effect of the participants' general perceptions of the IL was observed on the participants' perceptions of planning in the IL.

#### *Teachers' perceptions in implementing the IL*

The purpose of cluster 3 of the questionnaire was to investigate the perceptions of the teachers in implementing the IL. A Descriptive Statistics Test was analyzed and the result is illustrated in Table 7 below

Table 7  
Teachers' perceptions in implementing the IL

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cluster 3	26	2.64	4.55	3.6608	.52981
Valid N (listwise)	26				

To check whether the mean score of the teachers' perceptions of implementing the IL is statistically different from the test value of 3.5, a One-Sample T Test was run. The result indicated that no difference between the mean score of teachers' perceptions of implementing the IL ( $M=3.66$ ,  $SD=.53$ ) and the test value 3.5 was observed ( $t=1.548$ ;  $p=.134$ ). *The test result* showed that the teachers' perceptions of implementing the IL was above average.

The Descriptive Statistic Test was run to give more insight into specific features of teachers' perceptions of implementing the IL. The results are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8  
Teachers' perceptions of implementing the individualized learning in particular items

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
17. Teachers prepare and implement various teaching materials, equipment for learners with different learning needs.	26	1	5	3.65	1.129
18. Teachers integrate learners' learning styles into teaching-learning process.	26	2	5	3.69	.884
19. According to learners' individual learning pace, teachers design teaching materials.	26	1	5	3.65	1.093
20. Teachers make physical arrangements according to studies performed in the classroom.	26	2	5	3.62	.852
21. Teachers create small working group based on specific criteria.	26	1	5	3.23	.908
22. According to learners' interests, teachers execute the teaching and learning process.	26	1	5	3.62	1.061
23. Teachers change the learning environments according to the subject and the characteristics of learners.	26	2	5	3.62	.752
24. Teachers provide learners more opportunities to participate the cooperative learning activities, projects.	26	2	5	3.54	.761
25. Teachers prepare the appropriate environment for learners with special educational needs.	26	2	5	3.81	1.021
26. Teachers use assistive technology to support teaching-learning process.	26	1	5	3.69	1.011
27. Teachers take advantages from the learners' prior knowledge in teaching-learning process.	26	3	5	4.15	.675
Valid N (listwise)	26				

Since the IL model expects learners to pay more attention to the lesson or task, teachers should offer models of behavior such as creating small working group based on specific criteria. However, the results from Table 8 demonstrated that the participants seemed unsure of not only creating small working group based on specific criteria ( $M=3.23$ ) but also providing learners more opportunities to participate the cooperative learning activities, projects ( $M=3.54$ ) when the mean scores were quite low. By comparison, the results from Table 10 also revealed that the participants focused more on the perception of taking advantages from the learners' prior knowledge in teaching-learning process ( $M=4.15$ ). Since the effective way to implement the IL is to connect new knowledge to learners' prior knowledge, teachers can take advantages from the learners' prior knowledge in teaching-learning process.

To check whether there was a significant relation between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants' perceptions of implementing the IL, the Paired-Samples T-Test was also run. The mean score of the participants' general perceptions of the IL ( $M=3.8811$ ,  $SD=.40$ ) was higher than the mean score of the participants' perceptions of implementing the IL ( $M=3.6608$ ,  $SD=.53$ ). It implicated that there was a significant difference between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants' perceptions of implementing the IL ( $t=2.214$ ;  $df=25$ ;  $p=.036$ ). The results supported the conclusion that the participants' general perceptions of the IL have an effect on the participants' perceptions of implementing the IL.

*Teachers' perceptions in motivating learners in the individualized learning*

In the IL, there are various components suggested to improve the learners' motivation. The items of cluster 4 from the questionnaire aimed to discover the teachers' perceptions towards motivating the learners in the IL. A Descriptive Statistics Test was analyzed and the result is illustrated in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Teachers' perceptions of motivating learners in the individualized learning

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cluster 4	26	3.40	5.00	4.1154	.47724
Valid N (listwise)	26				

Aiming at investigating whether the mean score of the teachers' perceptions of motivating learners in the IL is statistically different from the test value of 4.0, the One Sample T-Test was run. The result showed that no difference between the mean score of teachers' perceptions of motivating learners in the IL ( $M=4.12$ ,  $SD=.48$ ) and the test value 4.0 was observed ( $t=1.233$ ;  $p=.229$ ). From the one sample T-test, it can be concluded that the teachers' perceptions of motivating learners in the IL was somewhat high.

The Descriptive Statistic Test was run to show the differences among specific perceptions of teachers in motivating the learners in the IL. The results are displayed in Table 10 below.

Table 10

Teachers' perceptions of motivating learners in the individualized learning in particular items

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
28. Teachers encourage learners for actively attending to the teaching-learning process.	26	3	5	4.38	.637
29. Teachers also encourage the learners to participate in different activities.	26	2	5	3.92	.744
30. Teachers provide opportunities for extra drill and repetition for learners with learning difficulties.	26	3	5	4.12	.711
31. Teachers provide opportunities for learners to express themselves.	26	1	5	4.15	.881
32. Teachers reward learners who exhibit good behavior.	26	1	5	4.00	.938
Valid N (listwise)	26				

The results from Table 10 provided an evidence that the teachers' responses to each perception related to motivating the learners in the IL were nearly equal. Particularly, encouraging learners for actively attending the teaching-learning process received the highest agreement ( $M=4.38$ ). The participants also perceived much on providing opportunities for learners to express themselves ( $M=4.15$ ). However, similarly to the perception of creating group work from cluster 3, the perception of encouraging the learners to participate in different activities also received the lowest agreements from the participants ( $M=3.92$ ).

The Paired-Samples T Test was applied to check whether there was a significant difference between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants'

perceptions of motivating learners in the IL. The mean score of the participants' general perceptions of the IL ( $M=3.8811$ ,  $SD=.40$ ) was lower than the mean score of the participants' perceptions of motivating learners in the IL ( $M=4.1154$ ,  $SD=.48$ ). The result indicated that there was a significant difference between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants' perceptions of implementing the IL ( $t = -2.275$ ;  $df = 25$ ;  $p=.032$ ). From the data analysis, it is obvious that the participants' general perceptions of the IL have an effect on the participants' perceptions of motivating learners in the IL.

#### *Teachers' perceptions in evaluating learners in the IL*

The last cluster from the questionnaire aimed to figure out the teachers' perceptions evaluating learners in the IL. A Descriptive Statistics Test was run and the result is illustrated in Table 11 below.

Table 11  
Teachers' perceptions of evaluating learners in the IL

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cluster 5	26	3.00	5.00	3.8750	.46368
Valid N (listwise)	26				

A One Sample T-Test was run to check whether the mean score of the teachers' perceptions of evaluating learners in the IL is statistically different from the test value of 4.0. The result showed that no difference between the mean score of teachers' perceptions of evaluating learners in the IL ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=.46$ ) and the test value 4.0 was observed ( $t=-1.375$ ;  $p=.181$ ). It can be concluded that the teachers' perceptions of evaluating learners in the IL was somewhat positive.

The Descriptive Statistic Test was run to illustrate the differences among specific perceptions of teachers in evaluating the learners in the IL. The results are displayed below.

Table 12  
Teachers' perceptions of evaluating learners in the IL in particular items

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
33. Teachers offer multiple options for learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills that acquired such as: portfolio, mini tests, projects, interview...	26	2	5	3.73	.827
34. In order to monitor the learning progress, teachers observe and keep records in the learners' profiles.	26	1	5	3.88	.993
35. Teachers monitor the effectiveness of teaching-learning process at regular intervals.	26	3	5	4.00	.748
36. Teachers share the assessment criteria with learners.	26	2	5	3.58	.809
37. To identify learners' developmental levels and individual differences, teachers use a variety of techniques such as observation, face to face interview, scale, individual and group projects, etc...	26	2	5	3.85	.784
38. Teachers provide feedback to learners.	26	2	5	4.23	.710
39. At the end of teaching periods, teachers discuss academic results with individual or groups.	26	2	5	3.69	.970
40. Teachers provide extra learning opportunities to correct inaccurate and incomplete knowledge and skills of learners.	26	2	5	4.04	.720
Valid N (listwise)	26				

The results from Table 12 revealed that teachers recognized the importance of providing feedback to learners ( $M=4.23$ ). It is because the learners will frequently be boisterous and dynamic as they attend activities which gives them instant, actionable feedback on what they need to do next. Furthermore, the participants also perceived much on providing extra learning opportunities to correct inaccurate; incomplete knowledge and skills of learners ( $M=4.04$ ) and monitoring the effectiveness of teaching-learning process at regular intervals ( $M=4.00$ ). On the contrary, it is crucial for teachers to share the assessment criteria with learners to promote the chances of learning taking place. The participants showed their less focus on sharing the assessment criteria with learners ( $M=3.58$ ).

The Paired-Sample T-Test was employed to solve the concerning whether there was a significant difference between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants' perceptions of evaluating learners in the IL. The mean score of the participants' general perceptions of the IL ( $M=3.8811$ ,  $SD=.40$ ) was slightly higher than the mean score of the participants' perceptions of planning in the IL ( $M=3.8750$ ,  $SD=.46$ ). The result indicated that there was no significant difference between the participants' general perceptions of the IL and the participants' perceptions of planning in the IL ( $t=.602$ ;  $df=25$ ;  $p=.951$ ). It could be concluded that there was no such effect of the participants' general perceptions of the IL was observed on the participants' perceptions of evaluating learners in the IL.

*Related to the advantages and disadvantages teachers face when the IL is implemented in their classroom, the results from the interviews are as follows:*

*Question 1: How long have you implemented the IL? What do you know about it?*

Most of the teachers perceived the model of the IL and how it would help the learners enhance their English. One of them said that:

*"Students have to study face to face with teachers, they can adjust their schedules to follow this leaning model easily. They can also quicken the learning process when they already got to know the topic." (Teacher 1)*

However, there was one participant who was not sure about the IL and somewhat perceived it as tutoring. The participant shared that:

*"Student study face to face with teachers, similarly to tutoring but more interesting because they will study with both Vietnamese teacher and foreign teacher each period." (Teacher 7)*

As can be seen from the answers, the participants understood the IL quite well and had good experience that was helpful to reveal the benefits and difficulties they face when IL model was implemented in their classroom. From that perspective, they are welcome to recommend some adaptations and solutions to enhance their teaching experience. With the interview question two:

*Question 2: In your opinion, what are the advantages of implementing the IL model?*

The participants listed many benefits of the IL. Strikingly, there were four main advantages. First and foremost, four out of nine participants shared their similar ideas towards the flexibility of the IL in term of learning pace, the material and the learning schedule. It was easy to realize that the results from the interview followed the same orientation with the literature view from chapter two. The flexibility was one of the most important characteristics of the IL.

*Teacher 3 shared, it is also flexible for each levels and courses since students can have the adequate material and particular lesson. For example: English for Pre-Starter, English for Business, English for Medical.*

After the first impressions, the second advantage discovered from the participants' answers was the instant support from the teachers. Four out of nine participants agreed that they can check the students' understanding or support the learners' problems instantly.

*"Students can improve their English skills effectively, they can solve their studying problems immediately with their teachers because they have one on one support from the teacher." (Teacher 1)*

Regarding to the third advantage of the IL, the participants pointed out the expansion of learners' confidence. The responses of the participants once again emphasized the positive effects of the individualization of the educational process manifests itself in the increased motivation for learning.

*"Limiting student's hesitation because of the face-to-face approach that can encourage student to practice many skills such as speaking, pronunciation..." (Teacher 4)*

Of equal importance, the participants also shared many other benefits of the individualized learning. The IL provides a very dynamic environment; therefore, teachers are very flexible in the way they implement such learning model.

*Teacher 3 shared that: "Various useful sources information from prestige websites, universities..."*

Besides the advantages drawn in the literature review, the participants' responses to the interview questions also mentioned other advantages including: promoting learners' sense of responsibility and maximizing teachers' enthusiasm. By realizing the advantages of the IL, the participants could help the learners improve their English skills by many adaptations and orientations that they have accumulated through their teaching experience.

*Question 3: What do you do to promote these advantages into your teaching context?*

The participants provided many interesting ideas to promote the advantages of the IL in the responses to question 3. To stimulate the flexibility of multiple materials and procedures, in which learners are given the substantial responsibility for planning and carrying out their own organized programs of studies, teachers use various ways to approach learners, including: getting to know learners in person, providing more opportunity to learn and investing lots of time to prepare materials for learners.

*Teacher 2 suggested: "I try to make friends with students to give them a friendly learning environment. When I know exactly where the students are, I can ask them to shorten their learning progress."*

Besides, to assess learners' strengths and needs in order to better align their training skills with each learner's learning style and interests while maintaining high standards instantly,

*Teacher 1 shared that, "we need to find information about many aspects in daily life to support the students and improve their English skills. Moreover, we should practice pronunciation and intonation with students regularly to help them correct their mistakes in speaking English."*

Moreover, the IL was also realized as promoting confidence by raising learner's attention to their restrictions and their ability to manage them. To encourage learners,

*Teacher 6 suggested that, "I prepare a lot of activities to help student interact more and more. I usually hold discussion, debating, public speaking,... with real context so that student can also acquire the language by meaningful lessons."*

Regarding the participants' responses, it became clear that they understood the advantages of the IL and the importance of how to implement it effectively. However, the IL was implemented by tailoring to each learner based on his or her learning goals and interests. This would be a very hard job for teachers, especially the time consuming when the number of learners and demands were growing. Teachers and learners face many difficulties in the IL.

#### *Question 4. What difficulties do you face when implementing the IL model?*

The results showed that most teacher concerned about the time-consuming. Seven out of nine teachers agreed that it took too much time to prepare adequate materials for various levels of learners and to work with each individual learner that led to unbalanced and unexpected schedule. One participant shared that:

*"We have to spend much time on correcting all the students' English skills, especially weak students. It is hard to manage and balance the time to spend for each student because weak students always need more time to spend with." (Teacher 1)*

The underlying concept is that each learner experienced a different developmental progression in the IL. Some learners have less demanding time to remember information than others. Some learners can rapidly comprehend conceptual ideas, while others need explicit illustrations. It can be noted that teachers have to spend a lot of time to prepare various teaching materials, equipment for learners with different learning needs or design teaching materials according to learners' individual learning pace. It is of course very time-consuming. The second disadvantage of the IL mentioned by the participants was lacking of interaction between learners. The examples could be observed in answers of teacher 3.

*"Lack of interaction between student and each other since students usually take face to face lesson with teachers." (Teacher 3)*

Furthermore, there was no such perfect learning model, the participants also mentioned other disadvantages including: being a new method in Mekong delta; only working with



exam preparation learners; and lacking teacher's immediate guide. Teacher 4 synthesized that: Weak points as follow:

*"- New to the tradition studying and teaching method currently apply here in the Mekong delta.*

*- Managing students with many levels at the same time is a hard job.*

*- Only has good approach and effect on exam preparation students."*

It can be concluded from the responses of question four that there were two main disadvantages of the IL related to time-consuming and lack of interaction between learner and learner. Moreover, other disadvantage was also pointed out including the difficulty of teachers when working with many levels of learners at the same time. Finally, *little attention has been devoted to the impact that the IL was only effective with exam preparation learners such as IELTS preparation or TOEIC preparation...* In the event that teachers are insightful of these disadvantages, they will find out what to do to overcome. As a consequence, the participants suggested some solutions to respond to question five.

#### *Question 5. What solutions do you suggest for each difficulty?*

It is true that when implementing the IL, teachers faced many difficulties and challenges... but thanks to them, the teachers have learned how to cope with these difficulties to overcome the problems, improve their teaching and help learners achieve their goals.

Particularly, to deal with the time-consuming, the teachers suggested that learners should review the material at home before coming to classes and teacher themselves should manage the time effectively.

*"We should give the students many sources of educational websites or material to review at home before they come to class. Teachers only need to make clear of the knowledge which students don't understand." (Teacher 1)*

Regarding to the lacking of interaction between learner and each other, teachers advised that they should focus more on creating group work, project... They stated that:

*"Create some activities outside the classroom such as speaking club at the café or assignment that require teamwork or group work to increase the interaction among students." (Teacher 6,)*

Another teacher, in addition, provided some recommendations for the disadvantages of working with many levels of learners at the same time as:

*"Teachers should invest their time to find material for each level at home, consult new lessons from reputation websites." (Teacher 3)*

From the result of the five interview questions, it is obvious to see the way in which participants regarded, understood and coped with pedagogic issues when implementing the IL. Last but not least, it is worthwhile to consider other suggestions from the participants to implement such learning model successfully.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

As the reported results, it can be concluded that the teachers' level of perceptions of the implementation of the individualized learning was just above average ( $M=3.8423$ ). This conclusion is different from the hypotheses that the teachers' perceptions towards the IL

is somewhat high. The result is also different from the relevant studies mentioned in the literature review.

In the IL model, learning goals should be stated in terms of what learners will *recognize* as a result of the lessons and what they will achieve after taking a course in such learning model. In this context, it is worthwhile to consider the result that there still were a number of teachers who were hesitant about the ISMART mnemonic when orientate the learning goal in the IL ( $M=3.31$ ). It is important to ensure the goal is specific and truly relevant to the learners' day-to-day work.

Regarding the teachers' general perceptions of the IL, the results from the questionnaire supported the conclusion that the IL affected two out of four elements including the participants' perceptions of implementing the IL and the participants' perceptions of motivating learners in the IL. Previous research has shown that the positive effects of teaching method on the individualization of the educational process manifests itself in the increased motivation for learning as well as in greater learner autonomy if compared to conventional teaching methods (Frunză and Petre, 2015). This suggests that when the teachers understood their roles in the IL clearly, they would know how to implement such learning model effectively and motivate their learners positively. The same logic underlines that the teachers' perceptions of motivating learners in the IL with the highest mean score ( $M=4.1154$ ). When the teachers help their learners improve motivation, that learner would come to be a partner in their learning and teaching course. They can feel a sense of personal, active engagement with the course, rather than passive learners in the class.

The results of the interview reflected some salient features of the IL. As what was demonstrated, it can be pointed out that flexibility was one of the greatest advantages of the IL when four out of nine participants shared their similar agreements on this benefit. It is coincident with Baker and Goldberg's (1973) research findings that the IL is a highly flexible model of multiple materials and procedure, in which the learner is given the substantial responsibility for planning and carrying out his own organized program of studies, with the assistance of his teacher and in which his progress is determined solely in terms of those plans.

Besides, Meyer and Faraday (2008) pointed out the benefits of IL, including encouraging social incorporation by countering alienation. In other words, the results of the interview revealed another disadvantage of the IL which is lacking interaction between learners with each other. All in all, although this current research findings had some similarities with other previous related studies, it provided some additional findings that had not been found in other research.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study shed light on how the teachers thought about the IL model and how they applied it to their context. The findings showed that the teachers' perceptions of the IL were high. In addition, there was a positive correlation between teachers' perceptions and the way they implemented the IL in their classroom. They also revealed the

advantages and disadvantages they faced when the IL model was implemented in their classroom. Particularly, there were four main advantages related to the flexibility of the learning pace, the material and the learning schedule; the instant supports from the teachers; the expansion of learners' confidence; and the enhancement of learners' scholarly performance. The results of the interview also revealed two main disadvantages from implementing the IL as time-consuming and lacking of interaction between learner and learner.

For the pedagogical implications, the study highlights the importance of the IL model. It is considered an essential alternative to help meet learners' variety of English language learning demand. However, when implementing this model, teachers should make decision on to what degree of the individualization will be implemented. Furthermore, the results also implied that this model was quite new so teachers need to be properly trained and invest a lot of time in making preparation for classes.

With regard to limitation and recommendations for further research, the study only collected data from one center with 26 participants, so it will better if research in the future has more participants to make the results more reliable and generalizable. In addition, the lack of consistent definitions for the term "individualized learning" and the dearth of studies in the field make it challenging to find relevant studies for this current research. It is also hope that in the future, further research can be conducted on the effects of the implementation of the IL on the teachers' perception of motivating learners.

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